

LIASCD Mini-Grant Winner - 2008

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Project: SmartMusic
School District: East Rockaway

Purpose

The importance of implementing the digital program SmartMusic can be laid out in many categories. SmartMusic has the ability to reach music students at their specific levels, while building and maintaining effort in practice time, adapting skills, and increasing awareness and understanding of music as a whole, and its relation to history and culture.

Problem

With our world turning into a more technological place, our students need a program that can deliver immediate feedback to them, while at the same time meeting them at their different levels of skill through different types of instruction.

In the past, students have been becoming lackluster in their devotion to the study of music and its instruments. With the advent of technological games and communication, students have become used to instant gratification and immediate attention. Unfortunately, the amount of time spent practicing their instruments and honing their skills has fallen to a low level. Students seem interested in learning about music, but the scope of its teaching must be altered. SmartMusic can alleviate many of these problems and issues.

Methodology/Implementation

To reach these goals, several subscriptions of SmartMusic were purchased and installed on several computer workstations at the school. Students come in on their free time and work at their own pace and ability levels. SmartMusic also allows for differentiated instruction, as the student can choose how their part is presented to them. Students can choose to see their parts as sheet music, played for them as an example and/or a guide, and students can adjust how they get their feedback.

This program has been becoming successful, as more students have been taking advantage of it. However, because there are only a few subscriptions currently at the school, students are finding that they need to wait a long period of time to take a turn with the program. It also prevents the students from spending as much time as they want or need on a piece. These two problems take away from the progress of the program. My plan is to implement this money in a manner to purchase more subscriptions of SmartMusic so that more students will have the opportunity to participate in this worthwhile program.

Results/Preliminary Findings

With this test group, the findings have been all positive. Students are spending more time practicing because they want to receive a higher grade. Because they receive an immediate response/grade, the students can keep going until they are satisfied with their performance. Due to this increase in practice time, students are developing their skills, both in performance, as well as in the appreciation of music. For example, students have become more adept at following their specific parts when participating in a large group. This understanding allows them to appreciate the emotions that music can evoke, and their contribution to it.

Conclusion

SmartMusic has allowed me to bring music “to life” for my students. Through this, they have developed skills through continued practice, which has enhanced their appreciation of different types of music. During this, they have also been exposed to self-evaluation, which encourages risk taking, and to set higher goals for themselves.